

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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TO : Department of State

FROM : Brussels June 2, 1950

REF :

SUBJECT : SPAAK ADDRESSES A CAMPAIGN RALLY

PRIORITY AIR Pouch
OF EUROPEAN MESSAGE

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In the early evening of May 31 the Socialists held a rally at the Place St. Denis in the commune of Forest near Brussels. This officer attended.

The Place St. Denis is in a ^{workers} residential area and is near several factories. The weather was good and the Socialist cooperative store near the Place was hung with red Socialist flags. There was a crowd of about 2,000 standing quietly at one end of the square facing the small speaker's platform.

A policeman on duty said that the Socialists now held open air meetings as often as possible. He explained that the P.S.C. Mayor of St. Josse ter Nord had prevented an open air party meeting in front of the Brussels North Station on May 1st by closing off the square with barbed wire and police armed with rifles and bayonets. Open air meetings were now a matter of pride for the Socialists the policeman said. It occurred to the writer that the open air was also cheaper than hiring a hall. Three campaigns this year have lowered party funds.

The guardian of law and order then volunteered that Belgium should become a Republic.

The crowd was not dense and it was easy to approach within a few yards of the platform. A small chorus sang several Socialist songs over the public address system. Two spectators, on being questioned, were unable to identify the names of the songs. The audience did not sing.

Spaak drove up alone in his black Chevrolet and the crowd stirred. He was well applauded as he mounted the platform. By this time there were about 4,000 people in the square.

There were present on the platform the Socialist Mayor of Forest and several Aldermen. The person who made the introduction said Spaak had started his political career in

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Forest by becoming a member of the Communal Council in 1927. It was pointed out that he had not spoken at Forest in ten years and it was hoped that he would address them more frequently in the future.

Spaak spoke in a moderate tone for thirty-seven minutes. The audience did not move and did not take their eyes off him. They were mostly middle aged. Probably they had become Socialists as youths when the party had more dynamism than today. Now that many of the social reforms that were then sought have been achieved, it is perhaps harder to awaken enthusiasm. There were very few young people present.

Most of the speech reviewed the Royal Question. Spaak asked for a reasonable solution, a Belgian solution, a solution which would please no one completely. He insisted that the Monarchy and the Dynasty must be preserved and emphasized that if Baudouin mounted the throne, the Royal Question would be over the next day. He added that the Belgian Government could then get on with its business. This brought applause.

He finished the Royal Question by saying that it must be solved or Belgium would eventually be destroyed.

Speaking on social security he urged that it be spread to the farmers and small shopkeepers and eventually everyone who worked.

Spaak's final appeal was in a calm vein: read the Socialist platform before Sunday (election day). Don't vote blindly; vote with reasoned conviction.

There was only ten seconds of applause before another orator jumped up to thank Spaak and praise his work as Foreign Minister. After he had been praised, he was presented with flowers. Five seconds applause. Spaak and most of the audience left as the other orator continued.

During his speech Spaak did not discuss foreign affairs. He did not criticize the Catholic Church and his only indirect reference to it was that the Socialist Party was tolerant. The Communists were pointedly ignored when he said that the Socialists had been the only party to stand firm against the unconditional return of King Leopold.

The moderate tone of the speech was aimed at the "bonsens" of the Belgian voter.

Chalmers B. Wood
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Third Secretary of Embassy